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THE DINING ROOM.

BY MARY GAY HUMPHREY.

THE necessary furniture of a dining room presupposes a certain formal aspect. A large table with twelve chairs exactly alike, is scarcely compatible with the admired disorder which is desirable in other apartments of the common household. But that punctuality, promptness and regard for minutes and seconds which we like to think is a portion of the unseen, but by no means unimportant part of the fitting out of every properly appointed dining room, goes well with its other formalities. This amount of formality, however, requires delicate adjustment. Stiffness is the last quality that should find a place in the dining room, which in all particulars should symbolize comfort and good cheer. Almost every one can recall some unhappy experience of anticipation and of keen feelings, repulsed by the forbidden aspect of a stiff, cheerless, chill dining room. Formality, while it must exist, should not be carried beyond its suggestiveness of order necessary to comfort.

The table naturally occupies the first thought. From those ingenious and painstaking people who rummage in the past, we learn that the table originally was a board laid on trestles, the two being combined and separated at convenience. The words "board," "boarders," "boarding," have thus special meanings and derived directly from this fact. These boards were hinged in the middle; the trestles were solid, three-cornered stools, and when the service to the appetite was over, the boards were turned together on their hinges, laid again on the stools, and served as smaller seats. These were not necessarily rude appliances. Much care was used in their making, and they were often skillfully carved and ornamented. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the development of society brought about the fixed table, and still later the drawing table, which can best be compared to our tables with leaves, although the pieces at the end, instead of hanging down, were cleverly made to slide under.

The introduction of mahogany and the revival of classic fashions brought about a further development of the dining table. Mahogany being a heavier, tougher wood, could be used in smaller quantities. The pillar and claw table, examples of which almost every one has seen, was the first advance, which was followed still later by the invention of Richard Gillow, whose table is practically that which is in use to-day. It is scarcely necessary in a table with telescopic slides, as they were called in Gillow's time, to suggest anything further in the way of an extension table. But the American cabinet-maker is put to shame by the work of the Chinese and Japanese, whose perfect joining compels all admiration, since he has never proven himself able to make a table that will not require all the available muscles of a household to enlarge or diminish its size. For this reason, as well as for more artistic reasons, unpretentious households, or those on whom the demands of hospitality are not likely to be great, do well when they can dispense with the usual clumsy and exasperating extension table.

In their stead can be recalled the old Pembroke tables, which preceded the extension table, and which, as side tables, are still found in many old-fashioned houses. A square or oblong table for daily use takes, in this case, the place of the closed extension table. It is unnecessary to dwell on the attractive fashions of these, which any one can have made if not able to procure otherwise.

The firm, slender legs, allowing it to be easily moved, may be copied, if no newer designs can be had, from Sheraton and Chippendale, for they "go" with much of this sort of thing, which is considered at present interesting in furniture. With this table the Pembroke are to have their dimensions adjusted and stand ready for more guests, or for serving, making part of the proper furniture of the room.

In dining rooms of imposing dimensions the circular table is preferable. The obvious reason is that guests can see one another—a reason which needs no comments to enforce it. An unwritten law should limit guests beyond the resources of a common conversation, since the pleasures of dining are so greatly dependent on one's immediate neighbors and their precarious conversational powers.

The ornament of the dining table since the removal of the cloth is but a figure of speech, by no means as important as its solid and perfect construction. The best woods for the table are mahogany and oak, and not more by reason of their beauty than their solidity, durability, and their freedom from the stains of hot dishes.

The relation of the chair to the table on the one hand, and to the sitter on the other, is the first consideration. Mr. Herbert Spencer says that with all our inventions, appliances for comfort and genius for luxury, no chair has ever yet been

older, lighter forms which Sheraton has made familiar, and of which several fine pieces are in this country, notably that of William T. Walters, Esq., of Baltimore. In these pieces the sideboard is more especially the descendant of the cupboard of our ancestors, and is intended for the display of the cups and tankards which were a great part of the show pieces of the house. These sideboards were bounded by a brass rail to protect the wall and to keep the cups from falling off, and at each end were large urns that were, in fact, wine coolers. These sideboards are so graceful that it is a great pity that their fashion is not more followed, although people fortunate enough to possess old pieces take great pleasure now in displaying them.

Whether the slab is marble or wood it should be covered with a cloth. Linen buffet cloths are now fashionable objects for decoration. Old Dutch embroidery is revived in their interest, and significant legends, such as "Let Good Digestion Wait on Appetite," or "Give us this Day our Daily Bread," are embroidered in old English text. More beautiful work is lavished on these in the drawn work, which in some instances is almost lace-like, and its execution one of the most refined of feminine accomplishments.

So much for the essential requirements of the dining room.

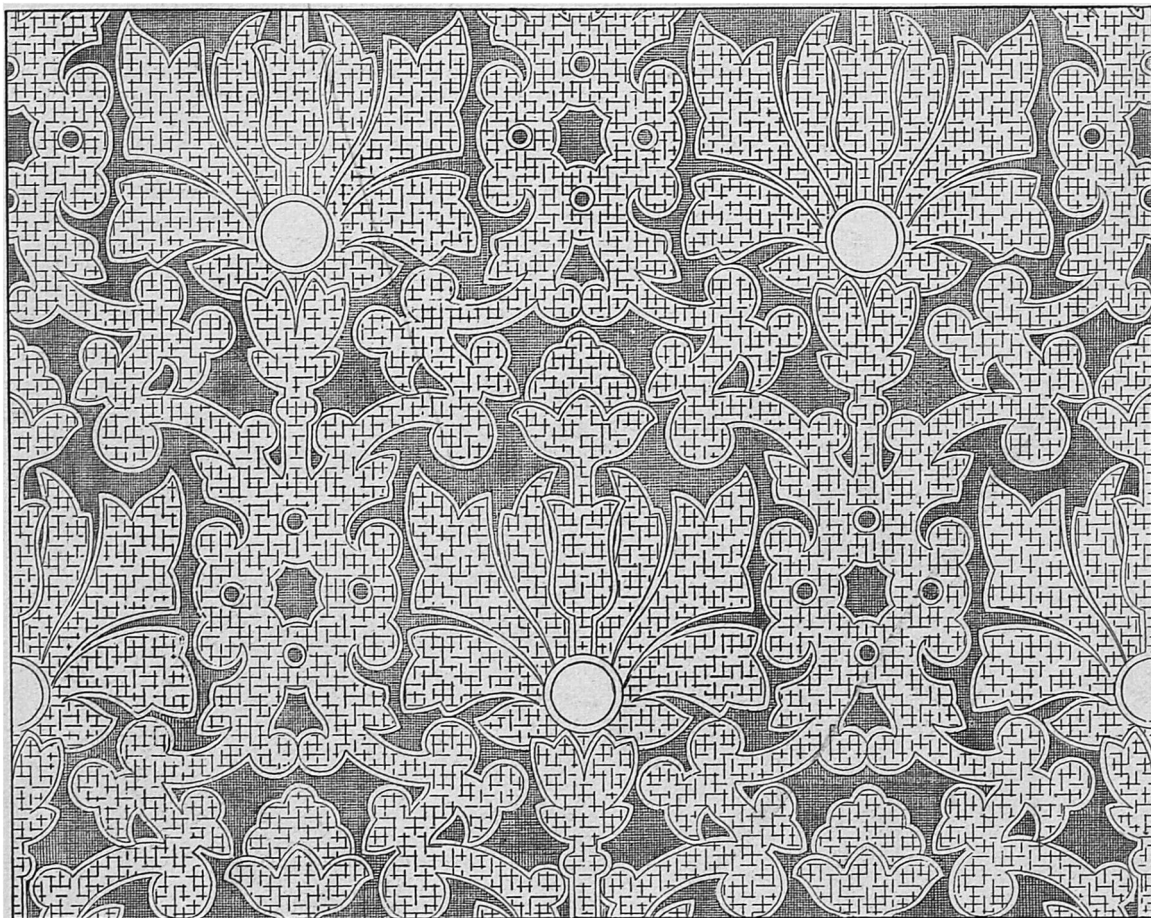
The non-essentials depend on whether the room shall serve as a dining room, or for the more familiar services of breakfast or lunch as well. Certain things are necessary in any room in which people are apt to linger, as they certainly will do after the more informal meals. The first of these that are suggested to every mind are books, papers and the opportunities for lounging. The first require shelves or small tables. For the former are the light Chippendale hanging shelves and small standing shelves. The latter are preferable on account of their solid construction, which goes with the necessary furniture of the dining room. These need not have doors, a thin silk curtain of some harmonizing tint making sufficient protection for the books. Such shelves have an additional recommendation in the top, which can be utilized in the further service of the dining room.

Small tables as usually constructed imperil daily the peace of numerous households. No pieces of furniture need to be provided with more sturdy legs, considering their occasional service in holding precious pieces of china, and yet they need to be light enough to be adjusted with one hand without stirring from the depths of a lounging chair. Life is so made up of small things that a little forethought in adjusting even such trifles lightens a great deal of the wear and tear of daily life, and in this light is worth what may be called serious consideration.

These occasional chairs and lounges ought not to be *en suite* with the regular furniture, but announce their intention by luxurious covering and depth of spring. Stamped leather, which, for example, is especially suitable for dining chairs, does not convey otherwise a marked sense of comfort.

One of the most suitable coverings for dining room chairs and lounges are the saddle-bags, brought from the East, with which ingenious upholsterers cover chairs and make into divan pillows, while a Daghestan rug serves for the longer covering. These having in them all the rich tints which belong to a dining room, mingle well with the rest of the furnishing.

Light in a dining room as a formal apartment is not as important as many other things, since the chief meal is taken by artificial light. One of the handsomest dining rooms in New York city has no window, but is lighted by stained glass in the ceiling.



WALL PAPER DESIGN.

The ground of this design might be in a dull shade of steel-blue, with the figure in a mustard color, and the cross-lining in black. The outlines could be in a darker shade of the color used for the figure. If more effect is wished, the ground could be in the mustard color, and the figure in steel-blue, with the cross-lining in gold. This design would also make a good pattern for stamped leather.

E. ALDIE CLEMENT, East Boston.

made with proper understanding of the human frame. Diners out, who have found themselves seated too high and too low for the proper wielding of their knife and fork, and who have had to divide their attention with keeping securely balanced on their hard, slippery seats, will agree with Mr. Spencer. The proper height for the table is the first essential for a dining chair. As a matter of private opinion every dining chair should have low arms to insure each person the necessary amount of room. Sufficient attention is not paid to the frame-work of dining chairs and an undue amount to the covering. The handsome leather covered chairs that are turned out by the gross are the delusion of most housekeepers. In time they become rickety from hasty joining, when firmness is all important considering the service the chair has to perform. The leather covered seats are uncomfortable declivities which the slippery surface makes all the more impossible to keep from sliding down. Having first secured firm, comfortable frames, which are to be regarded as possessions for a lifetime, the covering, since it can be removed as often as necessary, is a secondary consideration.

The sideboard, or buffet, usually overawes all the rest of the furniture of the dining room. The clumsy, massive pieces which appear to be the objects of ambition in the dining rooms of people of moderate means are far less attractive than the